Filling the Seat: Talawanda Board of Education Chooses Matt Wyatt to Fill Vacant Seat

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On Monday, September 30th, Talwanda School District held a Board of Education meeting. Shortly after the meeting was called to order, it quickly segwayed into a private, unfilmed executive session. This meeting was out of the ordinary; its primary goal was serving to determine who will fill the now temporarily vacant school board position following Mr. David Bothast's resignation. Despite having roughly 15 months left in his term, Bothast announced to the public through a letter written and published on Talawanda's website that effective September 9th, he would be stepping down from his position due to numerous negative comments and threats from the public in response to his involvement and decisions made on behalf of the Board. Sixteen people completed applications to fill the spot. This executive session involved determining who was best fit to serve the remainder of Mr. Bothast's term.

After a 40 minute private session, the meeting transitioned into its public participation segment. A cap of 30 minutes is always in place, and the public was allowed to provide commentary for up to 3 minutes per person. The first commentator was Ivan Carver, a resident of Hanover Township who ran for a school board seat in November of 2023. A few seconds into his address to the board, Mr. Carver said "Walking out of the meeting this past month I was asked about my allegiance. So I just want to make it clear to this entire board that my allegiance is to the students of this community." He identified his three main goals of serving on the school board as 1) creating a way of banding with other districts,

2) increasing communication between the community and the board, and 3) providing teachers with more say in district decisions.

Of the four public commentators following Mr. Carver, each supported his candidacy, two reading letters of recommendation for him, one an Oxford resident, and the other his wife. Each explored similar ideas of Mr. Carver's character and what qualified him to serve on the board. Emily Greenberg identified him as an "intelligent, thoughtful, data-driven and respectful" individual, praising his attempts in the community to pass the previously failed Talawanda School District Levy. Two others brought up his ability to communicate and understand a range of ideas from a diverse set of political perspectives, whether he agrees with those values or not.

Despite support for Mr. Carver, the Board determined through a unanimous vote that Matt Wyatt will temporarily fill the seat left vacant by Bothast. The motion was ultimately passed due to his near ten years of experience serving on the Elizabethtown Independent Board of Education in Kentucky. Mr. Wyatt has been a resident of Oxford for the last three years as well as Senior Director of Development at the Miami's Farmer School of Business. Board member Pat Meade stated, "One thing we're looking for is stability" and emphasized Mr. Wyatt's experience can provide insight to previous experiences he's had working on a school board. After the vote, he was sworn in as an official member of the Board. He has a bachelor's degree in Political Science and attended Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

Before the adjournment of the meeting, board member Dawn King addressed Mr. Carver and commented that the Board had received "25 letters of recommendation" in his favor to fill the seat, emphasizing the community had a great interest in his participation, and closed by saying "Please run for the position in 2025."

The next Talawanda Board of Education meeting will be held on Thursday, October 17th at 7:00pm.

Mr. Wyatt being sworn in on September 30, 2004 at Talawanda BOE meeting (Photo Cred: Talawanda City Schools)

Information on Mr. Wyatt, Newest Member of the Talawanda Board of Education:
https://justfacts.votesmart.org/candidate/biography/177936/matt-wyatt
Mr. Bothast's Resignation Letter:
https://www.talawanda.org/district-blog/entry/public-notice-from-the-board-of-education